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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9001
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2488
RUCNTXD/AMEMBASSY MAJURO PRIORITY 0053
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 3808
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA PRIORITY 0160
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5032
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1837
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4584
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1959
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2644
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0795
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000957

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PAPUA -- HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE HIGHLANDS

REF: JAKARTA 934

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Classified By: DepPol/C Stanley Harsha for reasons 1.4 (b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Alleged human rights violations by Indonesian security forces in the Papua highlands have declined significantly in recent years and the police have taken steps to inculcate respect for human rights among their personnel. Nevertheless, many Papuans remain deeply suspicious of the military and police. END SUMMARY

12. (C) On May 6, poloff visited Wamena, capital of the 200,000 resident Jayawijaya district to investigate the human rights situation in the Papua highlands. Subsequent meetings with human rights advocates in the provincial capital Jayapura also inform this report.

THE BAD OLD DAYS

13. (C) The Papua highlands have a history of human rights abuses. The Indonesian military (TNI) has long regarded the highlands as the redoubt of the Free Papua Movement (OPM) and other separatist groups. Military operations in the region probably peaked during 2003-2004, following an April 2003 OPM raid on a TNI armory in Wamena.

14. (C) During that period, TNI conducted operations to search for alleged OPM fighters and to recover weapons taken in the 2003 raid. An American missionary who has lived in Wamena for nearly 30 years told poloff that even when TNI did not target civilians, the operations displaced large numbers of highland residents from their homes. Human rights advocates maintain that the authorities have not investigated alleged incidents from this period, nor prosecuted those involved.

SITUATION IMPROVING

15. (C) That said, the human rights situation in the area has improved since 2005. Everyone we spoke to said the TNI had ceased large-scale military operations in the highlands. Mission team did not see any evidence of a large-scale

military presence in Wamena, as some human rights groups have alleged. Human rights violations which now occur sporadically are the exception rather than the rule, and do not appear to be part of any coordinated military or police policy.

¶6. (C) Officials from the Advocacy Network for Law and Human Rights in Central Highland Papua (JAPHAM-PTP)--a leading Wamena NGO--briefed poloff on their investigations into alleged human rights violations in Jayawijaya district. During the period 2005-2006, they reported five incidents of human rights violations involving seven victims, none of which were fatal. Alleged perpetrators included personnel from both TNI and the Indonesian National Police (INP).

¶7. (C) JAPHAM-PTP Chairman Theo Hesegem told poloff that none of these incidents appeared to be the result of a deliberate policy of using excessive force against civilians. Instead, he regarded them as isolated incidents where individual soldiers or police personnel--usually low ranking--committed human rights violations. The problem, said Hesegem, was that authorities had failed to punish anyone for these incidents despite the fact that JAPHAM-PTP had submitted detailed reports on the incidents to the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM).

¶8. (C) The situation continues to improve. JAPHAM-PTP officials documented only one major incident during 2007, which involved one victim and two TNI personnel. One of the TNI personnel accused a Papuan man who worked for him of stealing 2.3 million Rupiah (approximately 250 USD). The soldiers allegedly beat the man and burned him on the tongue, feet and penis. The soldiers allegedly involved have been

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relieved of duty and transferred to Jayapura, pending an investigation. Human rights groups in the provincial capital have been unable to gather any information about the status of that investigation. Hesegem said there were no incidents to date in 2008.

POLICE MAKING STRIDES

¶9. (C) Police are taking positive steps to improve the human rights situation. JAPHAM-PTP Chairman Hesegem told poloff that his organization regularly provided human rights training to the police in Jayawijaya district. The police, he said, were eager for even more training than his organization could provide. Hesegem has asked Komnas-HAM to assist in providing human rights training for the police. (Note: On the national level, Komnas HAM provides some human rights training at Jakarta's national police academy under an MOU with the INP. The MOU also provides for cooperation on investigations involving police officers.)

¶10. (C) In a May 8 meeting with Pol/C, the provincial police chief (Kapolda) underscored the INP's commitment to human rights training for all personnel (reftel). (Note: The INP has just named a new Kapolda for Papua. Poloff and DOJ/ICITAP officers are scheduled to meet him on May 15.)

¶11. (C) Hesegem said the TNI had been less receptive to working with his group on human rights issues.

PEOPLE REMAIN SUSPICIOUS

¶12. (C) Despite these improvements, people remain deeply suspicious of security forces. The memory of past human rights violations and security force operations resonates deeply for many highland Papuans. Human rights activists acknowledge the improvement in the area but say it will be a long time before most ordinary Papuans overcome their fear and mistrust of the police and military.

HEFFERN